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Fifth periodic report of States parties due in 2015

Singapore*

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Foreword

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Singapore's accession to CEDAW. It is also the year Singapore celebrates the 50th year of our independence. In this significant year, Singapore is pleased to present its Fifth Periodic Report on the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This Report covers the initiatives Singapore introduced from 2009 to 2015, to facilitate the progress of women. It also includes Singapore's responses to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's (Committee) Concluding Comments (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1) at the 49th CEDAW session and recommendations by the Committee's Rapporteur on follow-up in September 2014 (AA/follow-up/Singapore/58).

New legislation and policies were introduced to improve the protection of and support for women in Singapore. These include the Protection from Harassment Act to enhance the protection of persons against harassment, and the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act to criminalize exploitation in the form of sex, labour and organ trafficking. The Family Justice Act was introduced to centralize the administration of family-related court proceedings and strengthen expertise in the management and resolution of family-related disputes. The Women's Charter was also amended to better address divorce and maintenance enforcement issues.

Paternity leave and shared parental leave were introduced in 2013 to encourage greater shared parental responsibility. Paternity leave was increased in 2015 to encourage fathers to play a bigger role in child-raising. Maternity protection was also enhanced in 2013 to protect the maternity leave benefits of employees who are unfairly dismissed or retrenched during their pregnancy.

Through the issuance of religious rulings, Muslim law was brought into closer alignment with civil law. Singapore also reviewed its reservation against Article 11, paragraph 1, and has withdrawn it.

Women in Singapore have made great strides in various fields, e.g. from higher literacy rates to increased representation in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Singapore recognises that enhancing the status of women is a continuous process and remains committed to this effort.

(*Signed*) **Tan** Chuan-Jin
Minister
Ministry of Social and Family Development

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Executive Summary

Singapore acceded to CEDAW on 5 October 1995. It came into force for Singapore on 4 November 1995.

The Fifth Report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women covers the key initiatives introduced and developments in Singapore from 2009 to 2015. In accordance with Article 18 of CEDAW, the Fifth Report also responds to the Committee's 2011 Concluding Comments (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1) at the 49th CEDAW session, and recommendations by the Committee's Rapporteur on follow-up in September 2014.

Singapore continues to build an environment where there are equal opportunities for women and men to contribute to, and to exercise fundamental freedoms in the political, economic and social spheres.

Since the Fourth Report in 2009, the Government has made progress in key areas to improve and enrich the lives of women in Singapore.

Protection from Harassment

The Protection from Harassment Act came into force in November 2014, and enhanced the protection of persons against harassment, including cyber-bullying, stalking and sexual harassment both within and outside the workplace. A range of self-help and civil remedies are available to victims. The Government received feedback from members of the public, including advocacy groups for women, welcoming the legislation.

Family Justice Act

The Family Justice Act, which came into effect in October 2014, established the new Family Justice Courts. These Courts play a central role in the Government's effort to fundamentally improve the family justice system in Singapore. The Family Justice Courts adjudicate and resolve family disputes more effectively, and aim to reduce the acrimony involved in family-related disputes. Court processes were streamlined to reduce unnecessary legal costs and delay.

Addressing Divorce and Maintenance Enforcement Issues

The Women's Charter was amended in January 2011 to (i) strengthen the enforcement of maintenance orders; (ii) address the risk of divorce among minor couples; and (iii) mitigate the impact of divorces especially in proceedings involving children.

Four voluntary welfare organizations were established as Divorce Support Specialist Agencies in January 2015. These Agencies provide support for families with divorced parents.

Aligning Muslim Law and Civil Law

Under Muslim inheritance law, a greater share of the inheritance may be apportioned to men than to women. To address this, the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS)[1] issued new religious rulings to align Muslim law with civil law.

These new rulings enable Muslim men to secure the rights of their wives and dependants through properly planned nominations according to civil law, and are in line with the objectives and spirit of Muslim law.

Combating Trafficking in Persons (TIP)

Singapore adopts a whole-of-government approach to tackling TIP. The Inter-Agency Taskforce on TIP was established in 2010. It coordinates decisions and aligns policies between agencies. The Taskforce underscores the seriousness with which Singapore views TIP. Singapore continues to actively strengthen its laws to tackle the scourge of TIP. A significant milestone was the enactment of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act, which came into force in March 2015. The Act criminalizes TIP in the form of sex, labour and organ trafficking.

To demonstrate our commitment to combating TIP, Singapore ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in September 2015.

Reservation against Article 11, Paragraph 1

Singapore conducted a thorough review of its reservation against Article 11, paragraph 1. In keeping with our national workforce policies, human resource policies in the military have progressed over time to flexibly accommodate and support the life-cycle needs of military personnel, and enable servicewomen to have fulfilling careers in the military. In light of this progress, Singapore no longer requires this reservation and has withdrawn it.

Enhanced Protection of Workers' Maternity Leave Benefits

From 1 May 2013, an employer who retrenches an employee or dismisses her without sufficient cause at any point during her pregnancy has been liable to pay her a maternity leave benefit, if she had worked at least three continuous months for the same employer. Previously, employers were liable for their employees' maternity leave benefits only if the employees had been retrenched within the last trimester of their pregnancy, or dismissed without sufficient cause within the second and last trimesters.

In addition, the Government introduced Government-Paid Maternity Benefit, a cash benefit for working mothers who were previously ineligible for paid maternity leave (i.e. mothers who did not work for the same employer for three continuous months before delivery), if they had worked at least 90 days (regardless of whether such employment was non-continuous or for different employers) in the year before delivery. The initiative recognised the need to support working mothers in the context of changing and evolving work patterns and arrangements.

[1] Islamic Religious Council of Singapore.

Protecting Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs)

Singapore regularly reviews its laws and policies concerning FDWs to ensure that they stay relevant. All FDWs are protected under the Penal Code and the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act. The Act imposes work pass conditions which require all employers to take responsibility for the well-being of their FDWs. The Act was amended in November 2012 to impose harsher penalties for employers who breached work pass conditions.

Since January 2013, the Government has required employers to provide their FDWs with a weekly rest day or compensation in-lieu. If there is mutual written agreement for the FDW to work on her rest day, the FDW must be compensated with either a replacement rest day or monetary compensation pegged at her daily wage. This option was included after extensive consultations with employers and FDWs.

Encouraging Greater Shared Parental Responsibility and Enhancing Work-Life Support

To encourage greater shared parental responsibility, the Government introduced one week of Government-Paid Paternity Leave and one week of Government-Paid Shared Parental Leave as part of the enhancements to the Marriage and Parenthood Package in 2013. Government-Paid Paternity Leave was increased to two weeks in 2015 to encourage fathers to play a bigger role in child-raising. This is in addition to Infant Care Leave for both parents when their child is below two years old and Child Care Leave for both parents until the child reaches 13 years of age. In addition, the Government introduced a Work-Life Grant in 2013 for employers, to support the implementation of work-life strategies that would enable employees to manage work and family commitments.

Providing Greater Support to Singaporean Families with Foreign Spouses

A foreign spouse of a Singaporean is typically granted a Long Term Visit Pass (LTVP) with one-year validity in the first instance to enable him/her to remain in Singapore. In January 2015, the LTVP process was enhanced to provide Singaporeans and their foreign partners greater clarity, prior to marriage, on the foreign partner's eligibility for an LTVP.

In April 2012, the Government introduced the LTVP Plus (LTVP+) scheme to provide greater support to Singaporean families with foreign spouses. Couples with at least one Singapore citizen child from their marriage, or who have been married for at least three years, may be considered for the LTVP+, which has a validity period of three years in the initial issuance, and five years upon renewal. LTVP+ holders enjoy some healthcare subsidies.

A Marriage Preparation Programme and a Marriage Support Programme were introduced in December 2014 to help Singaporeans with foreign spouses better manage cross-cultural issues in their marriage, build a strong foundation for their marriage, and help the foreign spouse settle down in Singapore.

Advancing the Cause of Women on Boards

The Diversity Task Force regarding Women on Boards was formed in 2012 to examine the state of gender diversity on boards and in the senior management of

companies listed on the Singapore Exchange. It was prompted by the concern that women were under-represented on boards and in senior management despite making immense progress in education and employment.

The Task Force released its recommendations in April 2014. A Diversity Action Committee comprising illustrious business leaders and professionals from the private, people and public sectors was then formed in August 2014, to increase the proportion of women representation on boards of companies listed on the Singapore Exchange.

Public consultation

This Report was prepared by the Office for Women's Development of the Ministry of Social and Family Development, with input from the Inter-Ministry Committee on CEDAW and other agencies.

In response to paragraph 43 of the Concluding Comments to consult a wide variety of women and human rights organizations in the preparation of the Fifth Report, the Office and the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations (the national coordinating body for women's organizations in Singapore) jointly consulted women's groups in April 2015. Another consultation session with women parliamentarians was held in May 2015. These consultation sessions sought feedback from the participants on this Report and Singapore's implementation of CEDAW. Their feedback was incorporated into this Report where relevant, and also relayed to the Inter-Ministry Committee on CEDAW and other agencies for review.

Glossary of terms

AGC	Attorney-General's Chambers
AMLA	Administration of Muslim Law Act
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CPF	Central Provident Fund
CYPA	Children and Young Persons Act
EA Act	Employment Agencies Act
EFMA	Employment of Foreign Manpower Act
FDW	Foreign Domestic Worker
FJC	Family Justice Courts
FSCs	Family Service Centres
HPB	Health Promotion Board
ICA	Immigration & Checkpoints Authority
IMC on CEDAW	Inter-Ministry Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
LTVP	Long-Term Visit Pass
LTVP	Long-Term Visit Pass Plus
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOM	Ministry of Manpower
MSF	Ministry of Social and Family Development
MUIS	Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore)
NFVNS	National Family Violence Networking System
NTUC WDS	National Trades Union Congress Women's Development Secretariat
OWD	Office for Women's Development
PHTA	Prevention of Human Trafficking Act
ROMM	Registry of Muslim Marriages
SCWO	Singapore Council of Women's Organizations
SPF	Singapore Police Force
TAFEP	Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices
TIP	Trafficking in Persons

Part I

General background

Physical Environment

A.1 With a land area of approximately 718.9 square kilometres, Singapore is located between Peninsular Malaysia and Indonesia. Owing to its small land area, optimisation of land-use is of paramount importance. Singapore enjoys a tropical climate of abundant rainfall and high humidity throughout the year.

Demographic Characteristics

Population Trends

A.2 With no natural resources, the Government invests heavily in the development of its citizenry and encourages its people to work hard and be adaptable to changes in the global environment. This philosophy underlies Singapore's approach to national development.

A.3 As at end June 2014, the resident population, comprising Singapore citizens and permanent residents, was 3.87 million, an annualized growth rate of 0.7% from 2009. 15.7% were aged below 15 years, 73.1% were aged 15-64 years and 11.2% were 65 years and above. The median age of the resident population was 39.3 years in 2014, compared to 36.9 years in 2009. Males made up 49.1% and females made up 50.9% of the resident population.

A.4 The resident ethnic composition remains largely the same as the last census in 2010, with 74.3% Chinese, 13.3% Malay, 9.1% Indian, and 3.3% comprising other ethnic groups in 2014.

A.5 The population density increased from 7,025 persons per square kilometre in 2009 to 7,615 persons per square kilometre in 2014.

Marriage and Divorce

A.6 The general marriage rate for females increased from 38.9 per 1,000 unmarried resident females aged 15-49 years in 2009, to 40.8 in 2014. The median age at first marriage for brides increased from 27.5 years in 2009 to 28.2 years in 2014.

A.7 The general divorce rate for females decreased from 7.1 per 1,000 married resident females aged 20 years and over in 2009 to 6.5 in 2014. Those aged 30-34 years formed the largest proportion of female divorcees in 2014.

Fertility and Mortality Rates, and Life Expectancy

A.8 Singapore's resident total fertility rate was 1.25 births per female in 2014, compared to 1.22 in 2009. There were 37,967 resident live births, of which 51% were males, and 49% were females. See Article 12 for infant and maternal mortality rates, and life expectancy of resident population. The proportion of resident elderly (i.e. aged 65 years and above) women increased from 9.7% in 2009 to 12.1% in 2014.

Socioeconomic and cultural indicators

Standard of Living

B.1 The United Nations' Human Development Report 2014 ranked Singapore 9th out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index, up from 27th out of 169 countries in the 2010 Report. This reflects an overall improvement in the standard of living in the areas of life expectancy, educational attainment and real income.

B.2 Singapore's socioeconomic performance can be attributed to its continued political stability, quality judicial performance, and the high integrity of its Government.

B.3 In 2014, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was S$390 billion while GDP per capita was S$71,318. Singapore's economy continues to do well, with a real growth of 2.9% in 2014.

B.4 The median gross monthly income of full-time employed residents in Singapore was S$3,770 in 2014, compared to S$2,927 in 2009.

Inflation

B.5 The inflation rate was 1.0% in 2014.

External Debt

B.6 Singapore has no public sector external debt.

Labour Force Participation

B.7 The overall annual average unemployment rate in 2014 was 2.0%, down from 3.0% in 2009. See Article 11 for more indicators.

Literacy

B.8 The literacy rate for the resident population aged 15 years and above was 96.7% in 2014, up from 95.6% in 2009. See Article 10 for more indicators.

Religion

B.9 The main religions in Singapore are Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism and Hinduism. The 2010 Census showed that 33% of the resident population aged 15 years and over were Buddhists, 18% were Christians, 15% were Muslims, 11% were Taoists and 5% were Hindus.

Political system

C.1 Singapore is a republic with a parliamentary system of government. The Constitution provides for three main organs of state — the executive, legislature and judiciary.

Parliament

C.2 Singapore's Parliament is unicameral. In 2015, Members of Parliament were elected from 16 Group Representation Constituencies and 13 Single-Member Constituencies. Group Representation Constituencies comprise three to six

candidates each, with at least one candidate from a minority racial community[2] to ensure that minority races are represented, as a reflection of the fact that Singapore is a multi-racial country.

C.3 Up to nine Nominated Members of Parliament (not connected to any political party) may be appointed by the President for a 2.5-year term on the recommendation of a Special Select Committee of Parliament.

C.4 In addition, the Constitution provides for the appointment of up to nine Non-Constituency Members of Parliament, comprising individuals who received the highest votes amongst the unelected candidates from the opposition parties at a General Election. This ensures that views other than the Government's will be expressed in Parliament.

Executive

C.5 The Head of State is the President. The administration of the Government is vested in the Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister. The President shall appoint as Prime Minister a Member of Parliament who in his judgment is likely to command the confidence of the majority of the Members of Parliament. Ministers of the Cabinet are appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Cabinet is responsible for all government policies and the day-to-day administration of the affairs of the state, and is collectively responsible to Parliament.

C.6 The President has the power to veto the Government's proposals related to use of the nation's past reserves, appointment and removal of key office holders, orders under the maintenance of religious harmony, detention under internal security and investigations pertaining to corruption. These Presidential powers provide important checks and balances to the Government with regard to preventing the misuse of the nation's reserves and ensuring that the public service is impartial.

Legislature

C.7 The Singapore Legislature comprises the President and Parliament.

Judiciary

C.8 The Supreme Court, the State Courts, and the Family Justice Courts are the national judicial bodies. The Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice, the Judges of Appeal and judges who are appointed from time to time. The Constitution protects the integrity and independence of judges at the Supreme Court.

Singapore's approach to safeguarding the rights of women

D.1 The principle of equality for women is entrenched in Article 12 of the Constitution which states that "all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law".

D.2 Equal opportunities are available to men and women in Singapore. Gender equality in Singapore is based on the principle of meritocracy. This principle underlies the planning and implementation of policies and programmes across Government ministries.

[2] Malay, Indian or other minority communities.

CEDAW in Singapore

E.1 Singapore's Initial Report (CEDAW/C/SGP1), Second Periodic Report (CEDAW/C/SGP2), Third Periodic Report (CEDAW/C/SGP3) and Fourth Periodic Report (CEDAW/C/SGP4) were submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in January 2000, April 2001, November 2004 and March 2009 respectively.

E.2 On 22 July 2011, Singapore presented its Fourth Periodic Report to the Committee. The delegation was led by Madam Halimah Yacob, then Minister of State at the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports. The Cabinet was informed of the Committee's Concluding Comments in August 2011. To ensure wide dissemination of the Concluding Comments in line with paragraph 40 of the Committee's request, these Comments were made available on the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)'s website. Singapore also submitted an interim report (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1/Add.1) in December 2013 on some of the recommendations as requested by the Committee.

E.3 As a responsible member of the international community, Singapore takes its international obligations seriously. Singapore will only ratify a treaty when we are able to comply with the obligations thereunder. Our focus is on the full and effective implementation of commitments we have undertaken. At the same time, Singapore continually reviews our laws and policies with a view to ratifying more treaties. Apart from CEDAW, Singapore is party to various other international agreements or conventions, some of which are specific to women (see Annex A). Singapore is also a member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation. In addition, Singapore is represented on the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, an inter-governmental body formed in 2010 to promote and protect the rights of women and children in ASEAN.

E.4 Treaties and conventions do not automatically become part of the laws of Singapore unless they are specifically incorporated into the legal system. Singapore gives effect to its obligations under CEDAW by the enactment of domestic legislation where necessary. Aggrieved parties are thus able to seek legal recourse to the Courts by citing an equivalent provision in domestic law.

Part II

Article 1: Discrimination

1.1 The Constitution of Singapore is the supreme law in Singapore. Article 12 of the Constitution enshrines the principle of equality of all persons before the law and it specifically provides that "All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law." This principle continues to be upheld.

Article 2: Policy Measures

Complaints Procedure With Respect to Violations of Constitutionally-Guaranteed Rights to Equality

2.1 The principle of equality of all persons before the law is enshrined in the Singapore Constitution. This provision encompasses the non-discrimination of women.

2.2 Women in Singapore enjoy strong legal protection even though Singapore does not have specific gender-equality or anti-gender discrimination legislation. In addition to the Constitution, their rights are protected in legislation such as the Employment Act, the Women's Charter, the Children and Young Persons Act, the Penal Code, the Protection from Harassment Act and the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act. An aggrieved woman is able to seek redress under such laws and to report violations to the relevant authorities.

2.3 Other channels are also available for women and women's groups to give feedback (including complaints) on women-related issues. Any member of the public can write to the relevant Ministry or government agency or the forum pages of local newspapers about policies that affect them. Complaints received by Ministries or government agencies are followed up accordingly.

2.4 Singapore has not received any feedback that there are insufficient feedback channels; nevertheless, Singapore will continue to monitor and review if more such channels should be set up.

Government Consultation on Policies and Legislative Changes

2.5 The Government organizes regular dialogue sessions, focus group discussions and public forums to actively obtain the public's views on policies and legislative changes. One example is the Private Member's bill on the Prevention of Human Trafficking proposed by a Member of Parliament, Mr Christopher de Souza. Four focus group sessions were held between January and April 2014 to canvass the views of different stakeholders (including non-government organizations). An online consultation was also held between March and April 2014 to garner public views.

Gender Analysis

2.6 In the formulation of policies, Singapore adopts a stakeholder approach which carefully analyses their impact on affected groups. This also encompasses taking a gender-sensitive perspective on issues that may have a different impact on women and men. For example, recognising that women have different health needs compared to men, the Women's Health Advisory Committee was set up to promote the health and well-being of women.

2.7 As many policy issues are cross-cutting, a "whole-of-government" approach is adopted and all relevant Ministries would be consulted before government agencies submit policy papers to Cabinet for consideration.

Institutions for the Advancement of Women

2.8 There are two main national bodies overseeing women-related matters: the Office for Women's Development (OWD) under MSF, and the Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) on CEDAW.[3]

2.9 The Women's Desk was established in 2002 and reconstituted into OWD in 2011. The change was to better reflect its standing and role as the national focal point on women, for international cooperation pertaining to women, and to champion gender equality and the empowerment of women. It also reflected the growing importance and recognition of the role of women in Singapore society.

2.10 OWD analyses trends to ensure the appropriate and timely implementation of gender-sensitive measures and policies. Gender-disaggregated data is collated from Ministries and agencies and thereafter published on the MSF's website.[4]

2.11 The IMC on CEDAW was set up in 1996 to monitor Singapore's implementation of CEDAW. OWD supports the IMC. In response to paragraph 18 of the Concluding Comments, to ensure the effective development and implementation of gender equality policies, the necessary human and financial resources are drawn from agencies represented on the IMC. This is in line with Singapore's "whole-of-government" approach to gender equality policy and the domestic implementation of CEDAW.

Article 3: Guarantee of Basic Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom

3.1 The guarantee of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms is provided for in the Constitution of Singapore:

- No deprivation of one's life or liberty save in accordance with the law;
- Prohibition of slavery and forced labour;
- Protection against retrospective criminal laws and repeated trials;
- Equality before the law and equal protection of the law for all;
- Prohibition of banishment;
- Freedom of speech, assembly and association;
- Freedom of religion;
- Equal access to education; and
- Freedom of movement.

3.2 Singapore remains committed to achieving the goals set at the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA), as well as the Millennium

[3] The IMC on CEDAW comprises officials from the Ministries of Social and Family Development; Communications and Information; Culture, Community and Youth; Defence; Education; Foreign Affairs; Health; Home Affairs; Law; Manpower; and National Development, as well as the Attorney-General's Chambers, Islamic Religious Council of Singapore and Public Service Division.

[4] http://app.msf.gov.sg/Policies/Women-Celebrating-Women/Gender-Statistics.

Development Goals (MDGs).[5] The BDPA and MDGs continue to serve as reference points in the formulation of our policies. This approach is consistent with the recommendation at paragraphs 38 and 39 of the Concluding Comments.

3.3 Women in Singapore have made great strides in education and economic empowerment since the nation's independence in 1965 (see Articles 10 and 11).

3.4 Regarding paragraph 36 of the Concluding Comments recommending the establishment of an independent national human rights institution, the same aims may be achieved in Singapore through a decentralized but inter-locking and mutually-reinforcing system of legislation, regulation and institutional oversight. Singaporeans enjoy a high quality of life and special attention is paid to vulnerable groups through institutions such as the National Trades Union Congress for workers' rights, the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, and organizations concerned with women and other groups. These organizations include the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations and its member organizations (see Article 7).

3.5 According to the United Nations' Human Development Report 2014, Singapore ranked 15th out of 152 countries on the Gender Inequality Index with a score of 0.090[6] in 2013. This reflects the opportunities available to Singapore women in areas such as labour, education and representation in the Parliament.

Article 4: Special Measures

4.1 At paragraph 20(b) of the Concluding Comments, the Committee called Singapore to consider applying temporary special measures in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged. However, in Singapore's experience, even without temporary special measures, women have made rapid and significant progress over the last few decades, and have been able to participate fully and equally in all spheres of life and at all levels as evidenced by Singapore's good performance on the United Nations Gender Inequality Index 2013 (see Article 3).

Article 5: Sex Role Stereotyping and Prejudice

Progress in Eliminating Gender Stereotypes

5.1 The Government continues to work towards eliminating gender stereotypes through education and the use of mass media. Singapore's efforts as detailed at paragraphs 5.2 to 5.6 below are consistent with the recommendation at paragraph 22(d) of the Concluding Comments.

Education

5.2 Special attention is given to educational materials and curriculum to ensure that gender stereotypes are not perpetuated and that girls and boys are depicted as having equal access to various resources and opportunities. For example, textbook illustrations portray both genders as doctors (traditionally associated with men) and

[5] Singapore's BPDA report submitted in 2014 is at http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/national_reviews/singapore_review_beijing20.pdf.

[6] The score ranges from 0 (women and men fare equally) to 1 (women fare as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions).

highlight their equal involvement in household chores (traditionally associated with women).

5.3 All students take the same core subjects in primary school. While Home Economics used to be primarily taught to girls, both lower secondary girls and boys now study Food and Consumer Education. Upper secondary girls and boys can also choose to study Food and Nutrition, as well as Design and Technology, as electives.

Media

5.4 The Media Development Authority's Programme Code for TV discourages discrimination against any section of the community on account of gender, age, disability or occupational status. The Code also states that programmes should not make careless references to any group of persons as being inherently inferior. In addition, the TV Advertising Code requires that advertisements avoid stereotyping which could be demeaning or offensive to certain sectors of the audience, e.g. stereotyping in relation to race, religion, gender, age and disabilities.

5.5 The Media Development Authority also supports programmes that raise awareness of issues that women face, for example:

- ***Marry Me*** — A light-hearted drama, which aired in 2013, discussed the reasons women chose to marry late or stay single, through the stories of three single women;
- ***Achamillai Achamillai (No Fear)*** — A 12-episode talk-show, which aired in 2014, featured local women who excelled in various fields like sports, business and the media despite challenges in their personal and work life;
- ***Campaign on elimination of violence against women in Southeast Asia*** — An interview with Datin Paduka Intan Kassim, Chair of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, was aired by a Malay radio station in April 2014. It disseminated the message of anti-violence against women, and raised awareness of basic human rights and equality for women and children in ASEAN countries; and
- ***Beyond Limits: 8 Singaporean Women*** — An informational and educational series, which aired between October and December 2014, featured several exceptional Singaporean women who blazed a trail to the top of their traditionally male-dominated fields, e.g. commercial pilot Anastasia Gan, naval diver and sports specialist Esther Tan, prominent lawyer and politician Indranee Rajah, and blind artist and cultural medallion winner Chng Seok Tin.

5.6 The Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore also discourages sex stereotyping by prohibiting the portrayal of any person as a commodity or an object. It also stipulates that all persons (regardless of gender) should be portrayed in a manner that respects their dignity, and ensures that all advertisements are legal, decent and truthful.

Regulation of the Beauty Industry

5.7 All medical practitioners are registered with the Singapore Medical Council under the Medical Registration Act. Non-compliance with professional guidelines, including for aesthetic services, endorsed by the Council would result in disciplinary action.

5.8 Healthcare institutions such as medical clinics, including those that also provide aesthetic services, are licensed and regulated by the Ministry of Health under the Private Hospitals and Medical Clinics Act.

5.9 In response to paragraph 22(c) of the Concluding Comments to impose stricter safety regulations on non-medical practitioners such as aesthetic clinics, beauty salons and spas, such establishments are not allowed to perform invasive procedures (e.g. surgical incisions), use controlled medicinal products (e.g. antibiotics and steroids), and inject preparations into the body. Otherwise, they may be subject to prosecution.

Building Equal Partnership in the Family

5.10 In Singapore, the perception of a woman's role as one confined within the home has evolved. The employment rate of women between 25 and 54 years of age increased from 69% in 2009 to 76% in 2014. The proportion of dual-income married couples in resident households also increased from 41% in 2000 to 47% in 2010. Conversely, the proportion of married couples with men as sole income earners decreased from 40% in 2000 to 33% in 2010.

5.11 In the Singapore Fatherhood Public Perception Survey 2009, an overwhelming majority of respondents had a positive perception of fatherhood. 99% of the respondents agreed that fathers and mothers should share the responsibility of bringing up children, and 97% also agreed that a father has an important role in parenting. 96% of the respondents who were fathers stated that they were very committed to their roles as fathers.

5.12 Initiatives detailed at paragraphs 5.13 to 5.20 below address the recommendation at paragraph 22(a) of the Concluding Comments to put in place a strategy to modify or eliminate patriarchal attitudes and gender role stereotyping.

5.13 Singapore also raises awareness of men's responsibilities and roles as fathers, husbands and individual members of the family through campaigns and public education programmes.

5.14 Up till July 2015, the Families for Life Council oversaw the Dads for Life movement which encourages fathers to be more involved in their children's lives by highlighting the benefits of greater paternal involvement in child development, equipping fathers with relevant skills, and facilitating bonding activities between fathers and their children. The Centre for Fathering took over this role in August 2015, and has since overseen the Dads for Life movement, with support from MSF, to continue to encourage active fathering. The Centre set up a new Dads Adventure Hub in August 2015 to allow fathers to bond with their children through shared experiences and activities.

5.15 The Government promotes shared parenting through "FamilyMatters@School" programmes in close to 300 schools. In particular, "FamilyMatters@School for Fathers" (renamed from Fathers@School in 2014), encourages fathers to be role models to their children and to be more involved in their children's school lives.

5.16 The Government also works with community partners to run parenting programmes on gender roles and expectations within marriage. For example, the Government supports the Centre for Fathering in conducting the Beginning Parenting programme which comprises sessions on "A Strong Marriage to Welcome

your Newborn" and "Parenting Right from the Start" to give new parents confidence and skills to manage their new roles as parents.

5.17 In 2014, the Government highlighted the importance of a consultative approach in marriage, at "Cinta Abadi ... Marriage of A Lifetime", a marriage preparation programme for Muslim couples aged 21 years old and above. The Government also supports community partners such as INSPIRASI Hubs, centres for marriage preparation and enrichment for Muslim minor couples (consisting of at least one party below 21 years old), to organise events such as "Amazing Dad: Special Project for Fathers". Another Government-supported agency, Persatuan Pemudi Islam Singapura Vista Sakinah Centre for Remarriages and Stepfamilies, runs support groups for fathers to discuss their concerns and challenges in managing their multiple roles in their previous and new families.

5.18 The Government continues to encourage the media to highlight the role of men in parenting and caregiving. One example is the Malay drama series "Walimah 2", which was nominated for a prestigious award show on a Malay television channel.

5.19 The Income Tax Act was amended in 2010 to extend a tax relief (formerly known as Wife Relief) to married female taxpayers. Previously, only married male taxpayers supporting their families were eligible for this tax relief. The extension acknowledges the importance of female breadwinners, as it helps families where the wives are the main breadwinners. This small but important amendment is consistent with the recommendation at paragraph 22(b) of the Committee's Concluding Comments to eliminate gender stereotypes that promulgate discriminatory cultural concepts such as that of "the head of the household".

5.20 To encourage greater shared parental responsibility, the Government introduced paternity leave and shared parental leave in 2013 (see Article 16).

Successful Women Featured in the Media

5.21 There are many successful women in the public, private and people sectors (see Annex B). Some of them are in traditionally male-dominated professions. Some of them have also been featured in the media, for example:

- **Madam Halimah Yacob**, a veteran unionist, qualified lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Minister of State (Ministry of Social and Family Development), became the first woman Speaker in January 2013;
- **Ms Zuraidah Abdullah**, a Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police, heads the Airport Police;
- **Brigadier-General Gan Siow Huang**, Head of Air Intelligence and Director (Special Projects) in the Republic of Singapore Air Force, is the first woman to be promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General in the Singapore Armed Forces;
- **Ms Tan Su Shan**, DBS Bank's Group Head of Consumer Banking and Wealth Management, was named the world's Best Leader in Private Banking in October 2014. This is the first time that a Singaporean received the award;
- **Ms Jenny Lee**, Managing Partner in venture capital firm GGV Capital, ranked 10th among the world's venture capitalists, in the 2015 Forbes Midas List;

- **Ms Chew Gek Khim**, Executive Chairman of the Straits Trading Company and Tecity Group, was conferred the Businessman of the Year in the Singapore Business Awards 2015; and
- **Ms Porsche Poh**, Founder of Silver Ribbon (Singapore), a non-profit organisation that combats mental health stigma and encourages early treatment. She is also the Regional Vice-President (Asia Pacific) of the World Federation for Mental Health.

5.22 The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO) is the national co-ordinating body for women's organisations in Singapore. As at December 2014, it had 57 member organisations. To recognise and celebrate the many outstanding contributions of women to Singapore's development, SCWO launched the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame in March 2014. As of March 2015, a total of 119 women have been honoured across various fields as follows.

- Adventurers & Explorers;
- Advocacy & Activism;
- Arts/Culture/Entertainment;
- Business & Enterprise;
- Community/Social Work;
- Education;
- Environment/Conservation;
- Health;
- Government;
- Law;
- Science/Technology;
- Sports; and
- Uniformed Professions.

Article 6: Exploitation of Women

6.1 Singapore does not tolerate the trafficking of women and has legislation in place to protect women against the threat of trafficking.

6.2 Substantiated cases of TIP[7] are low. In 2014, there were 49 reported cases of alleged sex trafficking, but only 25 cases were substantiated upon investigation.

Inter-Agency Taskforce

6.3 Singapore adopts a whole-of-government approach against TIP. The Inter-Agency Taskforce on TIP was established in 2010 and is co-chaired by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Manpower (MOM). It includes representatives

[7] As defined under the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime.

from the Singapore Police Force (SPF), Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA), Ministry of Social and Family Development, Ministry of Health, Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Law. The Taskforce coordinates decisions and aligns policies amongst agencies in Singapore. Its active role and action underscores the seriousness with which Singapore views trafficking.

National Plan of Action

6.4 The Taskforce launched Singapore's National Plan of Action against TIP in March 2012 which sets out strategic outcomes and implementation plans to combat TIP from 2012 to 2015. The Plan is currently being reviewed to keep pace with the evolving modus operandi of human traffickers. The revised Plan will be ready in 2016.

6.5 The key objectives of the current Plan are to strengthen Singapore's capabilities along the holistic "4 'P's" strategy of prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership:

a. Prevention. Action to prevent TIP is undertaken on various fronts. The ICA and Police Coast Guard conduct sustained proactive checks to protect the sovereignty of Singapore's borders. SPF aggressively targets commercial sex syndicates and identifies trafficked victims through its enforcement activities. MOM issues work passes to foreign workers in Singapore and actively enforces labour regulations to deter and identify exploitation. Such measures contribute to the combat of trafficking against women.

b. Prosecution. Human traffickers are firmly dealt with under Singapore law. The ***Penal Code*** covers a wide range of criminal offences to prosecute those involved in different aspects of trafficking. The ***Women's Charter*** and the ***Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA)*** also provide for the punishment of offences against women and girls respectively. In 2011, the CYPA was amended and several penalties were enhanced to align them with penalties for similar offences in the Women's Charter, thus deterring trafficking in children and ensuring that boys and girls enjoy the same high level of protection against trafficking.[8]

The ***Employment of Foreign Manpower Act*** and ***Employment Agencies Act*** have comprehensive provisions to protect the employment rights and well-being of foreign workers, and criminalize acts that may be related to human trafficking.

Notwithstanding the slew of legislation that already covers trafficking offences, the Taskforce worked with Mr Christopher de Souza, a Member of

[8] The amendments include the following: (i) the maximum penalty for sexual exploitation of a child or young person (section 7) was raised from 2 to 5 years' imprisonment for the first conviction, and from 4 to 7 years' imprisonment for the second or subsequent conviction, or a maximum fine of S$10,000 (previously S$5,000) for the first conviction and S$20,000 (previously S$10,000) for the second or subsequent conviction, or both; (ii) for the unlawful transfer of possession, custody or control of a child (section 12), the maximum penalty was raised from imprisonment for a term not exceeding 4 years, to a fine not exceeding $10,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or to both; and (iii) for the importation of the child or young person (section 13), the maximum penalty was raised from 4 to 5 years' imprisonment or a maximum fine of S$10,000 or both.

Parliament and a lawyer, on a ***Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA)*** to criminalize TIP in the form of sex, labour and organ trafficking. The PHTA came into force in March 2015 and adopts the definition of TIP used in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (UN TIP Protocol), supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. The PHTA provides a framework for penalties that reflects the severity of TIP offences. It also allows for necessary help to be rendered to trafficked victims as assessed by the Director of Social Welfare.

The various legislative provisions described above are sufficient to deal with the various acts of trafficking as defined in the UN TIP Protocol. SPF and AGC work together to identify aggravating factors in trafficking cases, which would form the basis to seek an enhanced sentence. The PHTA addresses paragraphs 26(b) and 26(d) of the Concluding Comments. Paragraph 6.5 (c) below further outlines how the Government ensures the protection of trafficked victims.

c. Protection. The Taskforce funds shelters that offer protection for trafficked victims, including accommodation, medical care, counselling and translation services.

Trafficked victims are not charged for offences committed as a direct result of being trafficked. For trafficked victims who express their desire to return home, Singapore facilitates their return and works closely with their home countries to ensure such return.

d. Partnership. The Taskforce seeks assistance from foreign law enforcement agencies and embassies in Singapore during investigations. It also co-funds selected non-government organizations in their anti-TIP campaigns and events, and encourages trafficked victims to come forward so that their perpetrators can be taken to task.

Training and International Cooperation

6.6 Frontline and relevant officers across government agencies are trained to promptly detect and act on TIP cases. In addition, the Taskforce developed a 'TIP Card' which contains the key elements of trafficking as defined by the UN TIP Protocol and reflected in Singapore's PHTA. The TIP Card is issued to all frontline law enforcement officers so that they are aware of the indicators of trafficking. Law enforcement officers also attend overseas training on TIP and share their knowledge with other officers when they return. The Taskforce went on study trips to source and destination countries to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the various approaches and models adopted by their overseas counterparts in the fight against TIP.

6.7 In 2013, SPF collaborated with the French Embassy in Singapore to organize a three-day TIP workshop to enhance ASEAN Member States' capabilities and knowledge in combating sex trafficking and child exploitation.

6.8 Singapore's anti-trafficking measures, which include international cooperation and the training of personnel dealing with trafficking, are consistent with paragraph 26(c) of the Concluding Comments and demonstrates the Government's overall commitment to combat TIP.

Public Awareness of TIP

6.9 The Taskforce has raised public awareness on TIP in both broadcast and print media. To involve the community and further increase awareness of the issue, the Taskforce launched an S$80,000 TIP public awareness grant in 2013 to co-fund public education efforts by organizations and individuals. Following the success of the 2013 grant, the Taskforce launched and awarded a second tranche of the grant in 2014. One of the projects awarded under the grant was the "Multi-Sectoral Businesses Against TIP Conference" organized by Singapore Committee for UN Women and the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics in February 2014 and attended by more than 150 persons. In January 2014, the National University of Singapore hosted a labour trafficking conference, attended by about 60 students.

Continual Progress

6.10 The Government, through the Taskforce, will continue to engage key stakeholders (such as voluntary welfare organizations, the media, academics, students and private companies) in their anti-TIP efforts, as well as work with its regional and international partners through platforms such as the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime and its Working Group on Trafficking in Persons, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking.

6.11 In response to paragraph 26(a) of the Concluding Comments, Singapore ratified the UN TIP Protocol in September 2015, demonstrating our commitment to combating TIP.

Part III

Article 7: Public and Political Life

Women in Politics

7.1 Women in Singapore are not prevented from entering politics. Conversely, the various political parties in Singapore continually and actively seek suitable women candidates. Women occupied 24 out of 99 seats (24.2%) in the Singapore Parliament as at August 2015, up from 22 out of 94 seats (23.4%) in 2009. These percentages exceed the Inter-Parliamentary Union's world average of 21.9%[9] in 2014 and 18.8%[10] in 2009. As Singaporean women become more educated, more will consider entering politics in time to come.

7.2 In line with the recommendation at paragraph 28(b) of the Concluding Comments, the Parliament Secretariat provides institutional support and resources to all parliamentarians. Singapore encourages the growth and development of women parliamentarians by supporting their regular participation in international and regional events. For example, in 2013, Ms Ellen Lee was elected as the Southeast Asian Representative to the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians

[9] Both houses combined as at 1 December 2014.
[10] Both houses combined as at 31 December 2009.

Steering Committee (CWP). The CWP aims to increase women's participation in Parliament and to mainstream gender considerations in all Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's activities and programmes.

7.3 In January 2013, Madam Halimah Yacob was appointed the Speaker of Parliament, the first woman appointed to such a position. As at October 2015, there are six women political office-holders:

- Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth; and Leader of the House;
- Ms Indranee Rajah, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Law;
- Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Environment and Water Resources and Ministry of Health;
- Mrs Josephine Teo, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Transport and Prime Minister's Office;
- Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth; and Deputy Government Whip; and
- Ms Low Yen Ling, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Education; and Mayor of South West District.

7.4 Out of the five mayors in Singapore, two are women. Other than Ms Low Yen Ling, Ms Denise Phua is the Mayor of Central Singapore District.

Women in Public Service and the Judiciary

7.5 In the Singapore public service, women are appointed to leadership positions based on the principles of equal opportunity and meritocracy. These principles also apply to the selection of public sector officers for talent and leadership development programmes.

Public Sector

7.6 As at December 2014, women constituted 56.7% of the Civil Service. 26.1% of the Permanent Secretaries and 28.1% of the Deputy Secretaries were women. A Permanent Secretary is the highest position held by a civil servant in a Government ministry, followed by the Deputy Secretary position.

Judiciary

7.7 Women comprised 22.7% of judges in the Supreme Court, as well as 47.9%, 69.0% and 48.3% of judicial officers in the State Courts, Family Justice Courts and Supreme Court respectively, as at end December 2014.

Women in Decision-Making Positions

7.8 Singapore actively supports women's participation in decision-making positions. Initiatives as outlined at paragraphs 7.9 to 7.11 below are consistent with paragraph 28(c) of the Concluding Comments to raise awareness and support women's participation in decision-making positions.

7.9 BoardAgender, an initiative of the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations, was launched in 2011 with the support of MSF. BoardAgender facilitates greater awareness of the benefits of gender-balanced business, and encourages and enables women to contribute their expertise in boardrooms and committees. It organizes talks and seminars by organizations that have built the right culture for women to reach their fullest potential, and by successful women. Since 2011, it has collaborated with the Centre for Governance, Institutions and Organizations of the National University of Singapore to produce the Singapore Board Diversity Report annually. The report covers the health of corporate board diversity in Singapore.

7.10 The Monetary Authority of Singapore revised the Code of Corporate Governance in 2012 and included the guideline that the composition of the board and its committees should be diverse in terms of skills, experience, gender and knowledge of the company. This aimed to raise awareness among companies listed on the Singapore Exchange to take factors such as gender into consideration when deliberating on the composition of their boards.

7.11 The Diversity Task Force regarding Women on Boards was formed in 2012 to examine the state of gender diversity on boards and in senior management in companies listed on the Singapore Exchange. It was prompted by the concern that women continued to be under-represented on boards and in senior management despite making immense progress in education and employment. The Task Force released its recommendations in April 2014. The work received good media coverage and generated much public discussions, leading to greater awareness and knowledge on the topic. A Diversity Action Committee comprising illustrious business leaders and professionals from the private, people and public sectors was also formed in August 2014 under the auspices of Singapore Exchange Limited, to increase the proportion of women represented on the boards of companies listed on the Singapore Exchange.

Women's Participation in Non-Government Organizations

7.12 The OWD of MSF works with the three apex women bodies outlined below, representing more than 90% of women's groups in Singapore, to address issues facing women in Singapore.

Singapore Council of Women's Organizations (SCWO)

7.13 SCWO's key initiatives include BoardAgender, Maintenance Support Central and Singapore Women's Hall of Fame (see Article 5).

7.14 The Maintenance Support Central was set up in September 2011 to assist claimants who face problems receiving court-ordered maintenance following a divorce or legal separation. It provides assistance at different stages of the maintenance enforcement process, including legal advice, information on aid schemes, credit reporting, counselling, support in locating employment, housing and childcare services. Thus far, all the claimants assisted have been women.

People's Association — Women's Integration Network Council

7.15 The Council is the central body of the Women's Executive Committees of the People's Association.[11] The Women's Executive Committees, based at community centres/clubs, organize programmes for women to interact and build strong community networks.

National Trades Union Congress — Women's Development Secretariat

7.16 The Secretariat represents the labour movement and champions labour-related women's interests.

7.17 Some examples of its initiatives include:

a. ***Back2Work with U Programme***, which focuses on placement and skills acquisition to ease women back into the workforce so that they may enjoy greater job and income stability. Launched in late 2007, it includes initiatives such as job fairs, recruitment exercises and offline referrals. As at December 2014, over 26,000 women have been brought back into the workforce;

b. ***U Flex movement***, which helps companies understand the business benefits of adopting flexible work arrangements, and learn how to implement and manage such flexibility at work. An inaugural conference was held by the Secretariat in March 2014 to raise awareness and encourage employers to do so; and

c. ***WeCare for U Project***, which assists single mothers to find jobs and equips them with necessary employability skills. As at December 2014, the Project has reached out to over 500 mothers.

7.18 As at December 2014, about half of the 849,000 workers represented in trade unions affiliated to the NTUC were women. Four out of 16 members appointed to the NTUC Central Committee (the highest policy-making body of the labour movement) for the 2011-2015 term were women. They are Ms Diana Chia (President), Ms Nora Kang (Vice-President), Ms Cham Hui Fong (Assistant Secretary-General) and Ms Mary Liew (Member).

Article 8: International Representation and Participation

Participation in Regional and International Women's Meetings

8.1 Singapore participates actively in various regional and international meetings to share our experience in women's empowerment. These include:

- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Women and Economy Forum;
- East Asia Gender Equality Ministerial Meeting;
- ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women;
- ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children;

[11] PA promotes racial harmony and social cohesion in Singapore. PA's mission is to build and bridge communities in achieving one people, one Singapore.

- ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) and ACW Plus Three;[12]
- Women Parliamentarians of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly Meeting;
- United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Its Regional and Global Outcomes; and
- Commission on the Status of Women Meeting.

8.2 Singapore hosted the APEC Gender Focal Point Network, APEC Women Leaders Network as well as the Digital Economy on Women meetings in 2009. In November 2013, Singapore organized the ASEAN Plus Three Workshop on "Work-Life Harmony to Promote Women's Economic Participation" which was partially funded by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund.

8.3 Women from the private, public and people sectors also had the opportunity to attend, participate or represent Singapore in these meetings.

Women's Representation in the United Nations

8.4 Ms Noeleen Heyzer, a Singaporean, served as the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific from August 2007 to January 2014. She is the first woman to have taken on that role.

Foreign Service

8.5 Gender does not affect the assignment of jobs in the foreign service. As at end December 2014, there were 217 women (42%) out of a total of 515 foreign service officers.

8.6 Singapore has several women Ambassadors or Heads of Mission. See Annex B.

Article 9: Nationality

9.1 Women and men in Singapore have equal rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality.

9.2 Women and men in Singapore also have equal rights with respect to the nationality of their children. Overseas-born children can acquire Singapore citizenship by descent from either the mother or the father.

Part IV

Article 10: Education

10.1 The Compulsory Education Act mandates that the first six years of primary education is compulsory to ensure that all Singaporean children, whether male or female, residing in Singapore and of school-going age (i.e. above age six and below age 15) have equal access to quality education.

[12] "Plus Three" refers to Japan, People's Republic of China and Republic of Korea.

10.2 Every Singaporean child is given the opportunity to complete at least ten years of general education. Upon completion of their primary education, students can choose from a range of education institutions and programmes that cater to different strengths and interests.

Literacy and Educational Attainment of Women

10.3 Singapore has a high literacy rate for women. The literacy rate for resident females aged 15 years and over improved from 93.3% in 2009 to 94.9% in 2014. Among resident females aged 25-34 years in 2014, 78.1% have tertiary (i.e. polytechnic or university) qualifications, up from 70.4% in 2009.

10.4 Dropout rates in primary and secondary schools are generally very low. In 2014, the cohort drop-out rates for females was 0.0%[13] in primary school and 0.7% in secondary school (see Annex C, Table 1).

Primary, Secondary and Pre-University Education

10.5 In 2014, 369 schools offered primary, secondary and/or pre-university education. The total enrolment in those schools was 463,403, of which about half was female (see Annex C, Tables 2 and 3).

10.6 In 2014, the average class size for primary and secondary schools was 34 and 35 respectively, while the average class size for junior colleges/centralized institutes was 23.

ITE, Polytechnic and University Education

10.7 Women made up 37%, 48% and 51% of the full-time student enrolment at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), polytechnics and universities respectively in 2014.

10.8 Women are also well-represented in traditionally male-dominated courses. For example, the enrolment of women for the following courses in 2014 was as follows:

- 26% of the electronics and info-communications technology courses in ITE;
- 57% of the architecture and building courses, 63% of the science and related technologies courses, and 38% of the information technology courses in polytechnics; and
- 60% of the natural, physical and mathematical science courses, and 61% of Architecture and Building courses in universities. See Annex C, Tables 4 to 6.

Specialized Independent Schools

10.9 There are also specialized independent schools which offer higher-level programmes than mainstream schools, focusing on the development of specific talents and abilities of its students. These schools are the (i) Singapore Sports School; (ii) National University of Singapore (NUS) High School of Mathematics and Science; (iii) School of Science & Technology; and (iv) School of the Arts. Girls made up 48% of the total number of students in the Singapore Sports School; 30% in the NUS High School; 26% in the School of Science and Technology and 76% in the School of the Arts in 2014 (see Annex C, Table 7).

[13] The figure is less than 0.05%.

10.10 The girls at the Singapore Sports School have represented Singapore at various national and international sporting events, clinching more than 10 awards from 2009 to 2014. The girls in the NUS High School of Mathematics and Science also perform well and many have won awards in various local and international competitions. Girls at the School of the Arts have also won multiple awards and those at the School of Science and Technology have done well in various local and international competitions. See Annex D.

Article 11: Employment

11.1 Singapore's labour policies seek to create a labour market that offers work opportunities, with fair and progressive employment practices while giving businesses flexibility to organize their own activities.

11.2 The Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) was set up in 2006.[14] TAFEP formulates guidelines for fair employment practices to protect workers of all ages, gender, races and religion. Employers are expected to abide by the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices. Workers who face workplace discrimination may approach TAFEP for advice and assistance. Companies that do not comply with the Guidelines would be investigated by MOM and may have their work pass privileges curtailed.

11.3 Singapore's reservation against Article 11, paragraph 1 was entered to safeguard the welfare of women and their unborn children from certain hazardous occupations, for example, in the military. Singapore has conducted a thorough review of this reservation and considers that it is no longer necessary. In keeping with our national workforce policies, our human resource policies in the military have progressed over time to flexibly accommodate and support people's life-cycle needs, for example, when they get married or when they become parents. As a result of these efforts to create a supportive work environment, servicewomen are able to have fulfilling careers in the military. In light of this progress and in response to the recommendation at paragraph 30(a) of the Concluding Comments, Singapore has withdrawn its reservation against Article 11, paragraph 1.

Women's Participation in Workforce

11.4 Singapore's resident labour force[15] comprised 2.2 million people in 2014. The resident labour force participation rate[16] was 67.0% in 2014, up from 65.4% in 2009. It was 58.6% for women in 2014, up from 55.2% in 2009. Although this lagged behind men (75.9% in 2014 and 76.3% in 2009), there has been progress over the years. The resident employment rate of women in the prime working ages of 25-54 rose from 69.4% in 2009 to 76.0% in 2014.

11.5 More women are now found in traditionally male-dominated sectors, compared to the past (see Annex B). For example:

a. The proportion of women lawyers rose from 41% in 2009 to 43% in 2014;

[14] Previously known as the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices, it was renamed with effect from 1 April 2014. TAFEP comprises representation from employers, worker/unions and the Government.

[15] Aged 15 years and over.

[16] Aged 15 years and over.

b. The proportion of women doctors increased from 34% in 2009 to 39% in 2014; and

c. Women made up 28.4% of research scientists and engineers (RSEs) in 2013, up from 26.5% in 2009. Between 2012 and 2013, the number of women RSEs grew by 7.3%, compared to the growth of men RSEs at 5.6%.

11.6 Women also make up an increasing proportion of private sector employers in Singapore — 28% in 2014, up from 24% in 2009.

11.7 The female-to-male ratio of median gross monthly income of full-time employed residents remained generally stable from 2009 to 2014 at about 0.9. As with many other countries, women in Singapore generally earn less than men. More women than men tend to leave the workforce by choice for caregiving purposes. This reduces their average years of employment and working experience, which is reflected in overall lower salaries. In addition, the lower educational profile of older women in the workforce translates to lower salaries. The wage differential is smaller for the younger cohort of Singaporean workers. In fact, women in the younger age group (i.e. aged 15-29 years) earn a higher median gross monthly income than their male counterparts as they generally enter the workforce earlier than men who are required to serve a mandatory two-year term of national service.

11.8 See Annex E for workforce-related statistics.

Central Provident Fund (CPF)

11.9 The CPF is the foundation of Singapore's social security framework which helps Singaporeans to build up their retirement adequacy (see Annex F). Working Singaporeans and their employers make monthly contributions to the CPF accounts of the workers, for the following needs:

a. Ordinary Account: retirement and housing;

b. Special Account: retirement; and

c. Medisave Account: healthcare.

Supporting Women to Re-join or Remain in the Workforce

11.10 There are various initiatives to support women who wish to re-join or remain in the workforce, so as to enhance their retirement adequacy.

Promoting Work-Life Harmony

11.11 Singapore recognises the importance of work-life harmony, and encourages family-friendly initiatives such as flexible work arrangements, to enable both women and men to spend quality time with their families and share family responsibilities, while contributing at the workplace.

11.12 In 2013, the Government introduced the ***WorkPro Scheme***.[17] The Scheme provides financial incentives to employers to implement flexible work arrangements and redesign jobs to encourage economically-inactive Singaporeans to return to the workforce.

[17] A tripartite scheme developed by the Government, Singapore National Employers' Federation and the National Trades Union Congress.

11.13 The ***Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy***, which comprises the Government, unions, employers and the human resource associations, promotes the adoption of flexible work arrangements by employers.

11.14 Efforts by the Committee include organizing:

a. A biennial Work-Life Conference for employers and human resource practitioners to learn best practices from award-winning companies and exchange ideas with international researchers and experts on work-life issues;

b. A biennial Work-Life Excellence Award to recognise employers who implement work-life strategies as a holistic and effective business strategy that benefits both the business and the employees; and

c. A week-long Work-Life Campaign in November 2014 to increase the awareness of the benefits of flexible work arrangements. In conjunction with the campaign, the Committee issued a Tripartite Advisory to guide employers, supervisors and employees in implementing and using flexible work arrangements.

11.15 More employers are offering flexible work arrangements to their employees — 47% of establishments in Singapore offered at least one form of flexible work arrangement to their employees in 2014, up from 38% in 2011.

11.16 The ***NTUC WDS*** is another key party which has been actively promoting work-life harmony (see Article 7).

11.17 To help working couples balance their work and family commitments and encourage greater shared parental responsibility, the Government enhanced ***leave schemes*** to support parents, from May 2013 (see Article 16).

11.18 To support parents in their family care responsibilities while they work, the Government plans for and facilitates the setting up of ***child care centres*** to ensure accessibility and affordability of such services. Families enjoy monthly subsidies for centre-based child care. Greater financial support is provided to families with working mothers and lower-income families. About 20,000 new childcare places are expected to be added between 2013 and 2017. This will create places for one in two children in every housing estate.

Building Capacity

11.19 The ***Retirement and Re-employment Act***[18] took effect from January 2012 to enable more to work beyond the statutory minimum retirement age. This helps seniors who are willing and able to continue working beyond retirement to do so and boost their retirement savings. This is especially important for women who generally enjoy a higher life expectancy than men.

11.20 The ***Special Employment Credit*** bolsters the employability of older Singaporeans by providing employers with financial support to hire such workers. Through the ***Workfare Income Supplement Scheme***, the Government also tops up the CPF accounts of older and lower-wage workers if they work regularly, thereby boosting their retirement income (see Annex G). In addition, the Government raised

[18] Replaced the Retirement Age Act.

the ***CPF contribution rates*** of older workers to help them save for their healthcare needs and retirement (see Annex F).

11.21 Singaporeans, including non-working women, may tap on ***SkillsFuture programmes and initiatives*** from 2015 to keep their skills updated, should they decide to return to the workforce. This is part of a wide range of training subsidised by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (see Annex G).

11.22 Singaporeans re-entering the workforce may also tap on the ***Traineeship Programme***, a short-term on-the-job training programme to allow them to learn practical and basic work skills in a hands-on environment, with the possibility of being offered employment by the host company. Participants receive allowances and incentives upon completing the Programme and if they stay employed in the job or within the sector.

Greater Protection for Employees

Maternity Protection

11.23 In response to the recommendation at paragraph 30(b) of the Concluding Comments, the Employment Act allows all employees covered under the Act (regardless of citizenship or marital status) to claim maternity leave benefits. The Child Development Co-Savings Act further allows married parents of Singaporean children, including those not covered under the Employment Act, to claim maternity leave benefits. The Government-Paid Maternity Benefit scheme was introduced in 2013, to allow employees who do not meet the eligibility conditions for maternity leave benefits (i.e. did not work for the same employer for three continuous months before delivery), to receive a cash benefit as long as they have worked at least 90 days (even if it was non-continuous or for different employers) in the year before the birth of the child.

11.24 Singapore enhanced its maternity protection in May 2013 to cover all employees under the Employment Act and Child Development Co-Savings Act. Employers who retrench employees or dismiss them without sufficient cause at any point during their pregnancy are liable to pay their employees' maternity leave benefits, if they had worked at least three continuous months for their employers. Previously, employers were liable only if the employees were retrenched within the last trimester of their pregnancy, or dismissed without sufficient cause within the second and last trimesters. In addition, pregnant employees who feel that they had been dismissed unfairly may appeal to the Minister for Manpower, who may order the employer to reinstate or compensate the employee, if the dismissal is found to be unfair. It is also an offence to dismiss an employee during her maternity leave period.

Protection Against Sexual Harassment

11.25 Singapore takes a serious stand against sexual harassment, including workplace sexual harassment. The Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) came into force in November 2014 and provides a legal framework for standards on socially-acceptable behaviour within and outside the workplace. The provisions cover a wide range of conduct, including cyber bullying, stalking and sexual harassment. Any contravention of these provisions is an offence. The Act also provides remedies such as protection orders and allows civil actions for damages.

This Act puts into effect the recommendation at paragraph 30(d) of the Concluding Comments. The Government received feedback from members of the public, including women advocacy groups, welcoming the legislation.

11.26 Non-legislative measures have also been taken to protect women from sexual harassment at the workplace. Since 2009, the TAFEP and the Singapore National Employers Federation have been conducting workshops to educate employers on workplace harassment issues, and on establishing grievance-handling procedures. Complementing these workshops was a TAFEP handbook released in January 2011 to guide employers through the grievance-handling process.

11.27 These efforts enable workers to seek redress directly from their management via their companies' internal workplace grievance-handling procedures or through their unions. They may also approach TAFEP for advice and assistance. In addition, the Ministry of Law is working with MOM to develop guidance material to help employers and employees manage workplace harassment under the ambit of POHA.

Foreign Domestic Workers

11.28 Singapore adopts a multi-pronged approach to protect the interests of foreign domestic workers (FDWs), most of whom are women.

Legal Protection

11.29 All FDWs are protected under the Penal Code and the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA).

11.30 Under the Penal Code, employers convicted of abuse against FDWs are permanently barred from employing another FDW. Given our strict enforcement stance, the number of substantiated cases of FDW abuse has fallen from 60 cases in 2009 to 54 in 2014, with five employers or household members convicted and imprisoned between 2009 and 2014. This is despite an increase in the FDW population by 13.5% since 2009.

11.31 The EFMA imposes work pass conditions which require all employers to look after the well-being of their FDWs, such as personal safety, proper accommodation, adequate food and rest, prompt salary payment and provision of medical treatment. The EFMA was amended in November 2012 to double the penalties (to a fine of up to S$10,000 and/or imprisonment up to one year per charge) for employers who breached work pass conditions.

11.32 In August 2012, MOM imposed more stringent requirements to ensure the safety of FDWs working in Singapore's highly-urbanised environment. For example, employers are prohibited from asking their FDWs to clean window exteriors above ground level, unless the FDW is supervised, and window grilles are installed and locked during the cleaning process. Besides facing enhanced penalties, errant employers may also be permanently barred from hiring a FDW.

11.33 From January 2013, MOM has required employers to provide their FDWs with a weekly rest day or compensation in-lieu. If there is mutual written agreement for the FDW to work on her rest day, the FDW must be compensated with either a replacement rest day or monetary compensation pegged at her daily wage. Singapore had considered seriously the recommendation by the Rapporteur that monetary compensation cannot replace a weekly rest day for FDWs. However,

extensive consultations with employers and FDWs revealed that both parties preferred the flexibility to make mutually-agreed rest day arrangements.

11.34 While investigations into an FDW's claims of offence(s) are ongoing, MOM ensures that the FDW is provided accommodation and food. The FDW is allowed to seek employment during this period.

Education

11.35 MOM introduced a Settling-In Programme in 2012 to help first-time FDWs adapt to living and working in local households. The Programme incorporates the Safety Awareness Course, which educates FDWs on basic domestic high-rise safety, their rights and responsibilities under the work pass conditions, and how to foster better working relationships with their employers. It is conducted in English and in the FDWs' native languages.

11.36 MOM also issues publications and guide books to FDWs (in their native languages) and employers to educate them on their rights and responsibilities, social norms, how to build good relationships with their employers and FDWs respectively, as well as avenues to raise concerns or feedback.

11.37 All first-time employers, and employers who change FDWs more than four times a year, must attend an Employer Orientation Programme. This Programme covers good employment practices and the employers' obligations towards their FDWs.

11.38 FDWs are able to report grievances through channels such as a toll-free dedicated helpline manned by MOM officers and non-government organizations. During the Settling-In Programme, all FDWs are given the helpline number, feedback forms in pre-paid mailers addressed to MOM, and other important contact numbers (e.g. those of their embassies, non-government organizations and the police). MOM also conducts interviews with randomly-selected first-time FDWs during their initial months of employment. These interviews allow MOM to determine if the new FDWs have adjusted to Singapore's work environment and to reiterate to FDWs the importance of safe working conditions, and their rights and responsibilities. These measures are consistent with the Rapporteur's recommendation that FDWs have access to complaint and redress mechanisms.

Regulation of Employment Agencies (EA)

11.39 The Government regulates the practices of EAs, which serve as intermediaries between employers and workers, including FDWs. The legislative framework comprises the EA Act, EA Rules and administrative conditions (e.g. EA Licence Conditions which stipulate the responsibilities of EAs). The legislative framework stipulates that EAs have a duty of care towards employers and workers, which consists of, amongst others, helping both parties establish mutually-agreeable employment terms and conditions (such as a weekly rest day arrangement or payment-in-lieu), and safeguarding the well-being of workers.

11.40 The EA Act was amended in 2012 to raise the professionalism of the industry and address recruitment malpractices. Some of the key changes included capping the fees payable by employees to two months per year of the employment contract, introducing a fee refund for employees whose employment is prematurely

terminated, enhancing the penalty for operating an unlicensed EA, and increasing the security deposit amount payable by an EA.

11.41 MOM has a comprehensive EA enforcement and monitoring framework. Besides carrying out proactive inspections, MOM also investigates complaints or feedback on malpractice by an EA such as overcharging a FDW or compromising her well-being before deployment to her employer's household. EAs which violate the EA Act or licensing conditions may be given demerit points, fined, prosecuted or even have their licences suspended or terminated. MOM continues to explore ways to further tighten the regulatory framework of EAs.

Partnership

11.42 MOM consults non-government organizations extensively when reviewing legislation and administrative measures, and holds regular dialogues with them to follow up on issues and cases relating to FDWs.

11.43 Overall, Singapore has a strong regulatory framework to protect and provide FDWs with good employment terms. This makes Singapore an attractive destination for FDWs. In interviews with more than 900 FDWs in 2010, 90% were satisfied with working in Singapore and 70% intended to continue working in the country. Almost 90% were aware of their employment rights and obligations.

Pregnancy tests and diagnosis of sexually-transmitted diseases

11.44 Regarding the Rapporteur's recommendation to repeal the law requiring work permit holders to be deported on grounds of pregnancy, Singapore manages our population growth carefully to ensure that it is sustainable. Pregnancy testing also benefits female workers as it provides them with information on their pregnancy status and suitability for specific types of work.

11.45 There is no law requiring the deportation of foreigners with sexually-transmitted diseases, unless they are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus. The Government has given serious consideration to the Rapporteur's recommendation to repeal this law, but views this exception as necessary for public health reasons. This exception applies equally to both genders.

Article 12: Health

Singapore Healthcare System

12.1 Singapore aims to provide basic medical services that are affordable and of good quality for all. The Ministry of Health (MOH) regulates both public and private healthcare providers, and promotes healthy living and preventive health programmes.

12.2 As a result of this broad, overarching policy:

- Life expectancy at birth for the resident population continues to increase from 81.4 years in 2009 to 82.8 years in 2014. For women, it increased from 83.7 years in 2009 to 84.9 years (80.5 years for males) in 2014;
- Maternal mortality rate has remained low. There was no maternal mortality in 2009, and 2.4 maternal deaths per hundred thousand live and still-births in 2014 (among the lowest in the world);

- Infant mortality rate dropped from 2.2 per thousand resident live-births in 2009 to 1.8 in 2014; and
- Mortality rate for children aged under 5 years dropped from 2.8 per thousand resident live-births in 2009 to 2.6 in 2014.

12.3 In a 2012 study by Bloomberg, Singapore ranked first among the world's healthiest countries. The State of the World's Mothers Report 2015 ranked Singapore 14th out of 179 countries and the best place in Asia to be a mother.[19] This ranking is based on the mother's health, education and economic status.

Taking Care of Women's Health

Women's Health Advisory Committee

12.4 To equip women with the knowledge to look after their health, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) under MOH set up the Women's Health Advisory Committee in May 2012.

12.5 A three-year roadmap was developed to:

a. Make cancer screening more affordable for low-income women;

b. Make health a priority for working women; and

c. Equip women caregivers aged 40 years and above with the skills to take care of themselves and their dependents.

12.6 Several initiatives have since been implemented, e.g. the Workplace Health Promotion Grant which funds women's health talks, as well as breast and cervical cancer screening for working women. HPB partnered the Breast Cancer Foundation to offer free screening mammograms to low-income women from March 2013. As at end May 2015, close to 14,000 women have benefited from the mammograms.

Pregnancy Services and Benefits

12.7 The Government introduced more benefits for pregnant women and enhanced subsidies for married women undergoing assisted reproduction technology treatments, through the Marriage and Parenthood Package enhancements in 2013 (see Article 16 and Annex K).

12.8 MOH examined and widely disseminated materials on various aspects of healthcare for mothers, from pregnancy to birth and beyond, including mental health. For example, on its online portal, HPB provides materials on antenatal care and breastfeeding, and resource toolkits for parents of children up to six years old. HPB also conducts workshops in workplaces and the community to empower parents-to-be and parents with knowledge to establish good health practices from the prenatal period to when the child turns six years old.

Enhancing Caregiver Support

12.9 Women are usually the main caregivers in families. 11.3% of female residents outside the labour force in prime-working ages (25-54 years)[20] cited taking care of

[19] Source: State of the World's Mothers 2015, Save the Children.

[20] Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM. Based on 190,900 female residents aged 25-54 years outside the labour force in 2014.

their families or relatives as one of the main reasons for not working or seeking employment. Given the aging population in Singapore, the strain on caregivers may increase over time.

12.10 In order to address this, MOH developed a comprehensive suite of aged care services described below. These services support caregivers and would enable, in particular, women caregivers who desire to return to the workforce, to balance their caregiving and work obligations. For women caregivers who choose to remain outside the workforce, the support provided by aged care services would nonetheless free up some of their time spent on caregiving, enabling them to pursue some of their own interests.

12.11 Aged care services also directly benefit women in particular, given that in 2014, 55.1% of Singapore's resident population aged 65 years and above were women.

Respite Services

12.12 MOH introduced the Interim Caregiver Service in 2012 where patients who have just been discharged are provided with a full-time caregiver during the day while awaiting long-term care arrangements. This enables family members to continue working.

12.13 MOH also launched centre-based weekend respite care in July 2014 at nine eldercare centres across Singapore, and increased the number of nursing homes offering respite service to 17 since it was launched in May 2013. Caregivers may leave their elderly care recipients for a few hours in the weekend at an eldercare centre, or for overnight stays in a nursing home for a short period.

Financial Support

12.14 The Caregivers Training Grant subsidises training attended by caregivers to equip themselves with skills in caring for the physical and emotional needs of their care recipients. Caregivers include family members and FDWs employed by families looking after elderly and persons with disabilities. Between 2011 and 2014, about 87% of the Grant recipients were women. In addition, the FDW Grant was launched in October 2012 to help families defray the cost of hiring a FDW to care for the frail elderly or persons with at least moderate disability. As of May 2015, 55% of the Grant recipients have been women. Households with family members above 65 years old or with disabilities may also benefit from the FDW Levy Concession. From May 2015, the levy has been reduced from S$120 to S$60 per month.

Support in Caring for Elderly

12.15 Caregivers of seniors may contact the Agency for Integrated Care under MOH for information and referrals for services across the health and social aged care sectors. To provide better support, the Agency set up a one-stop call centre in September 2014.

12.16 See Annex H for other aged care services, initiatives to support senior citizens' healthcare needs, and initiatives on healthcare financing.

Article 13: Economic and Social Life

Building a Nation of Opportunity

13.1 Singapore is focused on building a nation of opportunity and an inclusive society where every citizen shares in Singapore's success. This is guided by key themes such as building a fair and equitable society, a cohesive community, and a liveable and endearing home for its people. We continue to build on past initiatives to transform our economy and strengthen social support. The initiatives are generally gender-neutral and made available to both men and women.

Support for Low-Income Older Women

Assistance in Old Age

13.2 The Government provides support to Singaporeans in old age through various initiatives. For instance, the 2014 Pioneer Generation Package provides healthcare subsidies to Singaporeans born on or before 31 December 1949 (see Annex H). From 2016, the Silver Support Scheme would provide quarterly payouts, ranging between S$300 and S$750, to the bottom 30% of Singaporeans aged 65 years and above with lesser means to supplement their retirement income (see Annex F). Women, in particular, would benefit from these initiatives, as they have longer life expectancies than men.

Improving Retirement Adequacy

13.3 There are various initiatives to encourage women to re-join or remain in the workforce. These initiatives help to build up their retirement adequacy (see Article 11).

13.4 The Government also encourages Singaporeans to set aside more retirement savings for themselves and their loved ones (including homemakers, who tend to have lower CPF savings), by providing tax relief to CPF members who top up their own CPF accounts or the CPF accounts of their family members using cash (see Annex F).

13.5 From 2016, the Government will lower the minimum sum which CPF members need to set aside in their own CPF accounts. CPF members may transfer amounts in excess of this minimum sum to their spouse's CPF Special or Retirement Accounts.[21] Many homemakers have had to look after young children or were main caregivers of elderly parents. As they were economically-inactive for many years, they tend to have low CPF balances. Given also that women tend to outlive their husbands, the new policy, which makes it easier for spouses of women homemakers to top up the latter's CPF accounts, will improve the latter's retirement adequacy.

13.6 Other initiatives, such as those that enable homeowners to monetise their housing assets to supplement their retirement income, apply to both men and women equally. Homeowners may sublet their flats or spare bedrooms, move to a smaller flat, or sell a portion of the remaining lease of their flats to the Government (see Annex F).

[21] When a CPF member reaches 55 years old, the savings from his or her Special Account and Ordinary Account will be transferred to a new Retirement Account.

13.7 Another initiative is that of CPF LIFE, a national annuity scheme launched in 2009, which provides CPF members with lifelong income from their CPF savings in retirement (see Annex F).

13.8 The CPF contribution rate for older workers, as well as lower-wage workers was also increased in order to improve their retirement adequacy. In addition, from January 2016, the Government will provide a higher interest rate of up to 6% (currently up to 5%) on the first S$30,000 of members' CPF balances, for members 55 years old and above (see Annex F).

Support for Those without Kin

13.9 Older women who have neither savings nor immediate kin to rely on may approach the nearest Social Service Office,[22] Senior Cluster Network[23] or Family Service Centre (FSC).[24] Financial assistance and counselling services are also available at those locations. Those with medical needs may also tap on the Medifund and the Community Health Assist Scheme to cover or defray their medical expenses, as well as the various ComCare assistance schemes for social assistance. There are also befriending services which provide social support for isolated and vulnerable seniors (see Annex F).

13.10 To better support seniors' care needs, the Ministry of Health has been building up capacity in home and centre-based care sectors. In home-based care, the care workers provide health and personal care services in the homes of the seniors. In centre-based care, the seniors visit the centres during the day to receive a range of health, social and personal care services (see Annex H).

Protection of Vulnerable Adults

13.11 The Government plans to introduce a Vulnerable Adults Act in end 2015 to enhance the protection of adults (18 years old and above) with mental or physical infirmities. Such persons are at risk of neglecting themselves, or being abused or neglected by their family members or caregivers, as they are often unable to care for themselves.

Participation and Achievements in Sports and Cultural Life

13.12 See Annex I for our women's participation and achievements in sports and cultural life.

Article 14: Rural Women

14.1 This Article is not applicable to Singapore as we are a city state.

[22] Social Service Offices are set up island-wide in Singapore to serve needy residents near their homes. SSOs administer social assistance and provide referral for other forms of assistance such as job-matching and family services.

[23] Senior Cluster Networks are set up to support vulnerable seniors to age-in-place. Comprising senior activity centres, social workers and volunteers, the Networks reach out to vulnerable seniors to encourage them to stay engaged in the community and receive coordinated care. Seniors who are too frail to live alone can live in elderly-friendly group homes.

[24] FSCs are key community-based social work entities that provide social work intervention, with a focus on serving low-income and vulnerable individuals and families to help them achieve independence, stability and resilience.

Part V

Article 15: Law

Equality for Men and Women

15.1 The principle of equality of all persons before the law is enshrined in the Constitution (see Article 2).

Newly-Enacted Laws

15.2 The new laws enacted between 2009 and 2015 are:

a. the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act to criminalize sex, labour and organ trafficking (see Article 6);

b. the Mental Capacity Act to protect the interests of persons with diminished mental capacity (see Annex J);

c. the Family Justice Act to centralize the administration of family-related court proceedings and strengthen expertise in the management and resolution of family-related disputes (see below); and

d. the Protection from Harassment Act to enhance protection against harassment within and outside the workplace (see Article 11).

Recent Law Amendments

15.3 Some laws were amended between 2009 and 2015 as follows:

a. the Children and Young Persons Act, to better protect children and young persons against sexual exploitation (see Article 6);

b. the Employment Agencies Act, to prevent exploitation of employees, including foreign domestic workers (see Article 11);

c. the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, to impose harsher penalties on employers breaching work pass conditions (see Article 11);

d. the Employment Act, to extend maternity protection to the full duration of pregnancy, so that employers are required to pay maternity leave benefits to employees who are dismissed without sufficient cause or retrenched at any stage of her pregnancy (see Article 11);

e. the Women's Charter, to facilitate marriages, address divorce and its impact, and strengthen the enforcement of maintenance orders (see Article 16); and

f. the Child Development Co-Savings Act, to effect the enhanced leave schemes under the Marriage and Parenthood Package 2013 (see Article 16).

Family Justice Act

15.4 The Family Justice Act came into effect in October 2014 to implement the Committee for Family Justice's recommendations concerning the establishment of the Family Justice Courts. The Committee was established in 2013 in the wake of rising divorce and annulment rates.

15.5 The new Family Justice Courts centralize the administration of family-related court proceedings and strengthens expertise in the management and resolution of family-related disputes. These include:

a. divorce cases;

b. guardianship and adoption cases;

c. application for personal protection orders;

d. probate cases; and

e. matters relating to children and young persons.

15.6 The Courts are empowered to adjudicate family disputes more effectively while lessening the trauma and acrimony involved in the process, benefiting families generally. A judge-led approach places the judge at the centre of the process, an improvement over the previous adversarial approach. Court procedures are also streamlined to reduce unnecessary legal costs and delay.

Singapore's Judiciary System

15.7 Singapore is widely reputed to have a corruption-free and efficient judiciary. Some accolades include attaining the top place in the "Legal and Regulatory Framework" category of the Institute for Management Development World Competitiveness Yearbook 2014, and the ninth place on the 2015 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index (which includes an assessment of a country's civil and criminal justice systems in terms of impartiality, effectiveness and efficiency). Singapore was the only Asian country in the top ten of that Index. In its March 2014 issue of the Asian Intelligence Report, Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd published the perceived corruption in the Singapore's court system as relatively low at 0.95 (on a scale of 0 to 10).

15.8 The direct and indirect benefits of a sound, corruption-free and efficient judicial system are available to all Singaporeans, regardless of gender, age or ethnicity.

Article 16: Marriage and Family Life

State of the Family in Singapore

16.1 The family unit in Singapore remains strong. Majority of respondents in the Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans 2013 reported having a close-knit family and being satisfied with their family life.

Supporting Marriage and Parenthood

16.2 The Government introduced the Marriage and Parenthood Package in 2001, and enhanced it in 2004, 2008, 2013 and most recently in 2015 (see Annex K for more details).

16.3 The enhancements made to the Package in 2013-2015 aims to achieve various objectives, including the following:

Objectives	*Examples of Enhanced Measures*
Improve access to Government-subsidized flats to support earlier marriages and births	Priority housing allocation for a Government-subsidized flat for married couples with children or expecting a child, if they are first-time buyers. Couples may also rent such flats at an affordable rental rate while awaiting the completion of their new flats.
Provide financial support for conception and delivery costs	Enhanced Government subsidy for assisted reproduction technology treatments.
Further defray child-raising costs	Baby Bonus cash gift, grant for newborns' medical needs, enhanced infant and child care subsidies and FDW levy concession.
Help working couples to manage work and family commitments and encourage shared parental responsibility	Paternity leave, shared parental leave, extended child care leave, adoption leave, and Work-Life Grant to support employers in implementing work-life strategies.

Laws Governing Marriage and Divorce

16.4 As a multi-religious society, Singapore has two legal regimes that govern marriage and divorce — civil law and Muslim law. The respective legislation are the Women's Charter and the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA).

Women's Charter

16.5 Enacted in 1961, the Women's Charter is a landmark piece of legislation that provides the legal basis for equity between husband and wife:

a. Monogamy: it forbids a Singaporean man from having more than one wife;

b. Management of household: it gives equal rights and responsibilities to husband and wife in the care of their children and home;

c. Matrimonial property: it entitles the wife to a share of the matrimonial property even though she may not have contributed directly to it financially;

d. Maintenance by husband: it makes it obligatory for the husband to maintain his wife and children during marriage and upon divorce unless there are exceptional circumstances; and

e. Family violence: it protects the wife and children from a violent husband; in extreme cases, it removes the husband from the matrimonial home.

16.6 The minimum legal age of marriage in Singapore is 18 years with parental consent. A person below 18 years of age wishing to get married has to apply for a Special Marriage Licence from MSF and attend a mandatory marriage preparation programme before he/she can marry.

16.7 The Women's Charter was amended in January 2011:

a. The 15-day residence condition for a couple to marry in Singapore was lifted, for couples comprising only of Singapore citizens and/or Permanent Residents. Previously, at least one party must have resided in Singapore for at least 15 days before the date of notice of marriage. This amendment facilitates marriage as couples no longer need to take long periods of leave to meet this statutory condition; and

b. Several measures to address divorce and other related matters were implemented (see Annex L). Measures which enhanced the enforcement of maintenance, benefited women in particular:

i. Empowering the Court to impose a wider range of measures against defaulters, on top of penalties like garnishee orders, fine and jail — the Court may order defaulters to post a banker's guarantee against future defaults, attend financial counselling and/or perform community service. The Court may also request access to the employment information of the defaulter from CPF Board in order to facilitate the direct deductions of maintenance payments from the defaulter's wages.

ii. Providing that women may report the maintenance amount owed to designated credit bureau(s) — this affects the credit standing of the defaulter, hence discouraging him from defaulting; and

iii. Obligating men to declare to their spouses-to-be (prior to remarriage), their maintenance debts and obligations towards their ex-wives and/or children — this ensures that their spouses-to-be are aware of their maintenance obligations before marrying them.

16.8 Four voluntary welfare organizations were established as Divorce Support Specialist Agencies in January 2015. Their social workers and counsellors provide information and non-legal advice, family dispute management, casework, counselling and other social support for divorced families. The Agencies also run a range of programmes that equip divorcing/divorced parents with co-parenting skills and help them and their children come to terms with the divorce.

Muslim Law

16.9 The practice of Muslim law varies among countries and the MUIS monitors these developments. The Fatwa Committee[25] of MUIS meets regularly to discuss points of Muslim law, review current practices and recommends new measures to ensure that our religious practices remain progressive.

Reservation to Articles 2 and 16

16.10 Singapore partially withdrew our reservation against Articles 2 and 16[26] in June 2011.

16.11 Singapore continues to retain a reservation against specific elements of Articles 2 and 16, to protect the rights of minorities in the practice of their personal and religious law. In particular, this allows the operation of Muslim law in

[25] This is an independent body of Muslim scholars, appointed by the President of Singapore to deliberate on issues affecting the administration of Muslim law.

[26] The specific sub-paragraphs for which Singapore's reservation was withdrawn are, Article 2, paragraph 1(g) and Article 16, paragraphs 1(b), 1(d), 1(e), 1(f) and 1(g).

Singapore. Muslim law, as set out in the AMLA, is administered by various agencies including the MUIS, Syariah Court and Registry of Muslim Marriages (ROMM).

Article 16, paragraph 1(a)

16.12 Although the AMLA provides for polygamy, polygamous marriages constitute only 0.3%[27] of Muslim marriages registered from 2009 to 2014 in Singapore. All applications for polygamous marriages are rigorously reviewed by ROMM. Only applicants deemed able to meet the stringent requirements are allowed to take a second wife.[28] The first wife may voice her objection to ROMM. If the application is approved and the first wife is dissatisfied with ROMM's decision, she may go to the Appeal Board. Subsequent to the second marriage, the first wife may also file for divorce on the ground of her husband's inequitable treatment.

16.13 Although the AMLA requires a woman to have a *wali* (legal guardian) for her marriage, the marriage may be solemnised by a *Kadi*[29] if the *Kadi* considers that the grounds on which the wali refuses to consent to the marriage are unsatisfactory. ROMM ensures that the right of the woman to be heard relating to the *wali* requirement is incorporated into its administrative procedures.

Article 16, paragraph 1(c)

16.14 Under the AMLA, men may seek divorce by pronouncing *talak* (articulating a word denoting divorce). Women may seek divorce by means of:

a. *Taklik*: The Syariah Court grants this upon a complaint made by a wife, substantiated by proof that her husband has breached one or more of the conditions of marriage agreed to by both parties at the point of marriage, e.g. desertion, non-maintenance, and physical or verbal abuse;

b. *Fasakh*: The Syariah Court grants a dissolution of the marriage where the husband fails to maintain his wife for 3 months or more, treats his wife with cruelty or upon any other grounds as recognised under Muslim law; and

c. *Khuluk*: The Syariah Court grants this if a wife wishes to obtain a divorce but is unable to satisfy the other bases of *taklik* or *fasakh* as long as she pays a sum of money to her husband, as agreed or determined by the Court.

16.15 The grounds on which women may seek divorce are wide-ranging and some are exclusive to women, such as the husband's failure to perform marital obligations (including providing maintenance).

16.16 While the AMLA stipulates an *iddah* (waiting period before a re-marriage is allowed) for a divorced woman only, in practice, the Syariah Court will not issue either party with the Divorce Certificate (required if the divorced man wishes to register a new marriage) until the *iddah* has lapsed. Hence, both men and women are effectively subject to the same waiting period. Further, men are required to maintain their wives during the *iddah* and provide a *mutaah* (consolatory gift) upon divorce.

[27] 72 out of 27,992.

[28] For example, whether the husband will be able to support more than one wife and treat both wives with equity, and whether there are reasonable grounds for polygamy.

[29] *Kadis* are officials of religious standing appointed by the President of Singapore to consider, solemnise and register Muslim marriages, with or without a *wali*.

Article 16, paragraph 1(h)

16.17 Under *faraidh* (Muslim inheritance law), men are apportioned a greater share of the inheritance than women. To address this, the MUIS Fatwa Committee issued *fatwas* (religious rulings) to protect the financial welfare of Muslim women and their dependants under *faraidh* and to align Muslim law with civil law.

16.18 The *fatwa* on joint tenancy, issued in 2008, recognises the surviving spouse as the legal owner of property held jointly. Previously, the wife could only serve as the trustee of her deceased husband's share of the joint tenancy, which would subsequently be distributed to other beneficiaries. Under a civil law joint tenancy arrangement, the ownership of a property would vest in the surviving joint tenant upon the death of one joint tenant. Hence the *fatwa* on joint tenancy aligns Muslim law with civil law.

16.19 The *fatwa* on Central Provident Fund (CPF) nominations, issued in 2009, recognises that when Muslim CPF account holders make a nomination in favour of his wife or children, it is considered a valid *inter vivos* gift.[30]

16.20 The *fatwa* on revocable insurance nominations was updated in February 2012 to allow Muslim policy holders to nominate their spouse or dependants to receive the full payout from the insurance company as a valid *inter vivos* gift.

16.21 Previously, the CPF or insurance nominee was only a trustee and would have to return the monies to the estate to be distributed according to *faraidh*.

16.22 MUIS supported three conferences organized by the Muslim Financial Planning Association (see Annex M). These conferences addressed concerns on perceived inequities concerning Muslim law and highlighted Islamic wealth planning instruments that, *inter alia*, further protect and benefit Muslim women.

Article 16, paragraph 2

16.23 The AMLA was amended in 2008 to raise the minimum age of marriage for Muslims from 16 to 18 years for both genders, in line with civil law. The AMLA allows a girl below 18 years old to get married only under special circumstances and with the *Kadi's* permission. Such marriages are rare and the number has dropped by 38% from 29 in 2009 to 18 in 2014.

16.24 The Government, in partnership with Malay Muslim organizations, continues to actively highlight the adverse implications of marrying at such a young age, through public education initiatives.

Choice of Adjudication Between the Syariah Court and Family Court[31]

16.25 We note the Committee's concern at paragraph 15 of the Concluding Comments. It should be noted that since 1999, Muslim women and men can opt to pursue some matters at the Family Court instead of the Syariah Court.

16.26 For example, if a Muslim woman wishes to settle divorce-related matters (e.g. custody of children, disposition or division of property), she may approach either Court. If she chooses the Family Court, she may apply to the Syariah Court for leave to do so. The requirement to apply for leave is applicable to both Muslim

[30] Transfer or gift that takes effect during the policy holder's lifetime.

[31] Part of the Family Justice Courts.

men and women, unless both spouses agree to have matters heard before the Family Court.

16.27 The AMLA was also amended to make it easier for Muslim women to enforce court orders made by the Syariah Court, which no longer needed to be registered in a District Court before becoming enforceable. Like non-Muslim women, Muslim women may also commence enforcement proceedings at the Family Court without any prior registration.

16.28 Aggrieved parties may lodge a Magistrate's complaint at the Family Court for breach of Syariah Court orders, punishable upon conviction with a maximum sentence of 6 months' imprisonment.

Raising Awareness of Gender Issues

16.29 Muslim women have been taking up important positions in the Muslim community (see Annex N). MUIS continues to address the needs of women through consultations and collaborations with women's groups. MUIS also increases interest in and widens the discussion on gender issues in Islam through events and programmes (see Annex M). These events aim to encourage reform-minded thinking among religious leaders on gender relations, based on Islamic points of reference.

Providing Greater Support to Singaporean Families with Foreign Spouses

16.30 The Government recognises the unique needs of foreign spouses and their families, and their desire to build stable families and contribute to Singapore. Measures were introduced to assist foreign spouses, who tend to be women, to settle down in Singapore with their families.

16.31 The foreign spouse of a Singapore citizen is typically granted a Long-Term Visit Pass (LTVP) with a validity period of one-year in the first instance. In January 2015, the LTVP application process was enhanced to provide Singaporeans and their foreign partners greater clarity, prior to marriage, on the foreign partner's eligibility for an LTVP. Previously, they received this information only after marriage, upon their application for an LTVP. This enhancement helps couples make more informed decisions and better plan for their future, by providing them with greater clarity upfront.

16.32 The Government needs time to assess that the marriage is stable before it considers according longer-term immigration status such as permanent residence and citizenship to foreign spouses. The factors considered include the duration of the marriage, whether the couple has children from the marriage, and the financial ability of the Singaporean spouse to support the family. These criteria are applied on a gender-neutral basis.

16.33 Additionally, Singapore introduced measures outlined at paragraph 16.34 to reduce the uncertainty of stay for foreign spouses in Singapore.

16.34 The Government introduced a LTVP Plus (LTVP+) scheme in April 2012 to provide greater support to Singaporean families with foreign spouses. The LTVP+ comes with a longer validity period of three years in the initial issuance, and five years upon renewal. LTVP+ holders enjoy healthcare subsidies for inpatient services at public hospitals at a level similar to Permanent Residents. Foreign spouses with at least one Singaporean child from their marriage may apply for a LTVP+. For those

without a Singaporean child, the Government will look at other factors such as the duration of the marriage, and will generally consider more favourably those who have been married for at least three years.

16.35 Foreign spouses who hold a LTVP or LTVP+ require only a Letter of Consent from the Ministry of Manpower to enable them to work. Their employers are not subject to foreign worker quotas and levies, unlike employers who recruit work permit-holders. This facilitates the employment of foreign spouses as it puts them on par with Permanent Residents and Employment Pass holders, whose employers are also not subject to the restrictions and levies.

16.36 The Marriage Preparation Programme and Marriage Support Programme were introduced in December 2014. These help couples gain insights into cross-cultural issues in their marriage so as to build a strong foundation for their marriage, and help foreign spouses settle down in Singapore. The Marriage Support Programme also offers conversational language skills to foreign spouses and provides advice on avenues to seek job opportunities. Volunteers are trained as buddies to befriend and assist these couples.

Part VI

Article 24: Commitment of States Parties

Violence against Women

24.1 Singapore does not tolerate any form of violence against women. We tackle this through a four-pronged strategy.

(i) Robust Legislative Framework

24.2 Under the ***Women's Charter***, a victim of family violence may apply to the Court for a Personal Protection Order, Expedited Order or Domestic Exclusion Order.[32] The breach of any such Order is a criminal offence.

24.3 The Court may also order the perpetrator, victim and/or family members to attend counselling (i.e. Mandatory Counselling Programme). The Programme aims to rehabilitate the perpetrators, and to support and protect victims and their children from violence.

24.4 Violence against women, within and outside a family context, is also covered under the ***Penal Code***, which criminalizes acts that cause death and physical harm, assault, sexual offences and wrongful confinement; and those using words or gestures intended to insult the modesty of a woman. These offences usually carry heavy penalties to deter offenders and signal society's strong condemnation of such acts. In response to paragraph 24(e) of the Concluding Comments, some sex-disaggregated data on violence against women is published on the MSF's website (see Annex O).

[32] A Personal Protection Order restrains the respondent from committing family violence against the applicant. It may be granted on an expedited basis (Expedited Order) if the Court is satisfied that there is imminent danger of family violence being committed against the applicant, even before the respondent has been served with the application. A Domestic Exclusion Order restrains the respondent from entering the applicant's home.

24.5 See Article 11 for the new ***Protection from Harassment Act***.

(ii) Multi-Stakeholder Approach

24.6 Singapore established the Family Violence Dialogue Group in 2001, jointly headed by the MSF and the SPF. It comprises the FJC, Singapore Prison Service (SPS), MOH, Ministry of Education, Chairpersons of Regional Family Violence Working Groups (see below), National Council of Social Service[33] and social service agencies. It is a strategic planning and policy group that facilitates work processes among the agencies providing services for families affected by violence. It also coordinates public education efforts and develops new areas for collaboration on family violence. Services provided to families affected by violence include hotlines, crisis shelters for women and their children, medical care, counselling, translation, institutional or foster care for children, and other support services. This addresses paragraph 24(d) of the Concluding Comments on providing adequate assistance and protection to women victims of violence (see Annex P).

24.7 Since 2003, six Regional Family Violence Working Groups, led by non-governmental organizations, have been harnessing community energy to spearhead and plan joint regional activities. These activities aim to raise awareness of family violence, examine new trends at the grassroots level and seek new ways to help families affected by violence. The Working Groups include hospitals, the SPF, crisis shelters, social service agencies, and FSCs. These Working Groups also provide feedback to the Dialogue Group on gaps in provision of services for families affected by violence.

24.8 Established since 1996, the National Family Violence Networking System (NFVNS) provides multiple access points for victims to obtain help. This system links the SPF, SPS, hospitals, FSCs, FJC and MSF for closer collaboration and networking, ensuring that agencies are clear about their roles and the management of cases.

(iii) Training and Professional Competency

24.9 A manual, "Integrated Management of Family Violence in Singapore", provides a common understanding among agencies on how to handle family violence cases. It spells out the protocol, procedures, roles and responsibilities of each agency in the NFVNS. Agencies continually review the manual to ensure adequacy and quality of care.

24.10 MSF and SPF co-organize the NFVNS symposium annually to strengthen partnership between agencies, and learn best practices from one another.

24.11 Judicial Officers in the FJC have a broad range of experience in the areas of law over which they preside, including application of legal provisions on violence against women. They also receive comprehensive continuing judicial education and knowledge management support.

24.12 They are supported by a pool of trained psychologists, social workers and counsellors who give immediate counselling and other necessary support to victims of family violence. These psychologists, social workers and counsellors likewise undergo continuing training and regular supervision.

[33] Umbrella body for social service agencies in Singapore.

24.13 Police officers are trained to be sensitive to the trauma suffered by the victim and there are specific guidelines for them to help victims in distress. Substantiated cases are prosecuted and victims are referred to counselling services or medical social workers for further assistance.

24.14 Singapore's approach to dealing with victims of family violence as outlined at paragraphs 24.11 to 24.13 above is consistent with the recommendations at paragraph 24(b) of the Concluding Comments to provide mandatory training for judges, prosecutors and the police when dealing with cases of violence against women.

(iv) Public Education and Awareness

24.15 Agencies under the Dialogue Group and Working Groups conduct public education initiatives on family violence annually. Such initiatives aim to raise awareness on family violence and encourage help-seeking behaviour, which is in line with the recommendation at paragraph 24(c) of the Concluding Comments. The NFVNS also organizes annual roadshows to promote such knowledge.

24.16 Communities and organizations may also apply for financial support under the Funding Scheme for Public Education Initiatives to Empower Families Facing Multiple Stress Factors, in their outreach and public education initiatives (see Annex Q).

Regional Efforts

24.17 As a member of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), Singapore adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Elimination of Violence Against Children in ASEAN in October 2013, underscoring our commitment to eliminate violence against women and children.

24.18 In addition, Singapore is taking the lead at the ACWC to establish the ACWC Network of Social Service Agencies. The Network facilitates training and partnership of social service agencies among the ASEAN Member States in preventing, protecting and helping victims of violence against women and children.

24.19 Singapore also hosted a three-day training course in April 2014 for frontline ASEAN social workers who work with women and child victims of violence. It provided a platform for the participants to discuss the signs and symptoms of family violence and abuse; identify the impact on perpetrators, victims and witnesses; and learn the different models of intervention to ensure safe practices for families and social workers.

Marital Rape

24.20 The Penal Code was amended in February 2008 to make it an offence for a husband to engage in non-consensual sexual intercourse with his wife under certain circumstances where there is evidence of a breakdown in their marital relationship (see Annex R). These clearly signal that her consent to conjugal relations has been withdrawn and the amendments provide the necessary protection for women under these circumstances.

24.21 In response to paragraph 24(a) of the Concluding Comments, Singapore will continue to actively review its marital rape law.